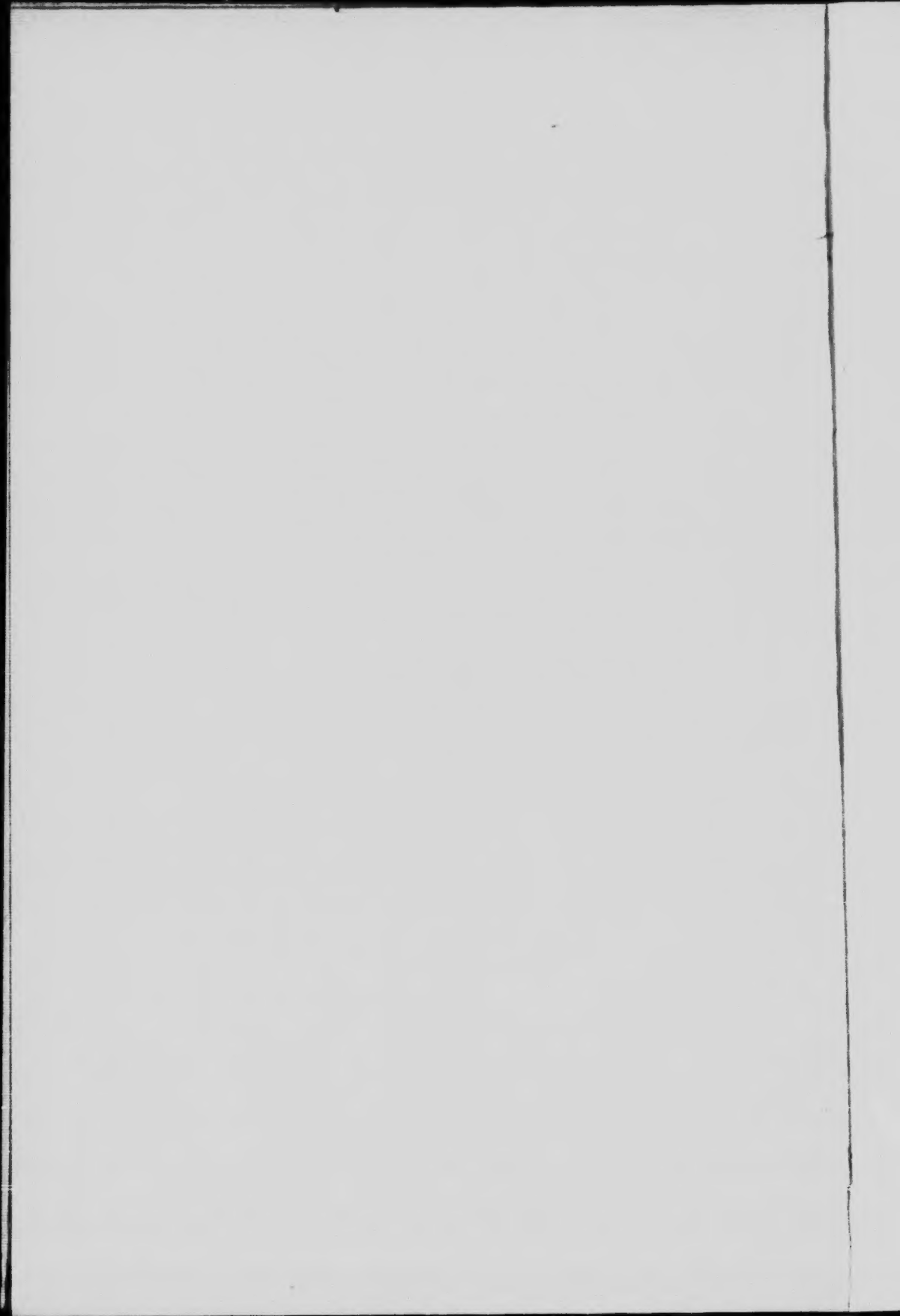




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ADVENT

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

AUGUST STRINDBERG

Translated by CLAUD FIELD



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ADVENT

A MYSTERY PLAY

Dramatis Personæ

Lagman (literally "law-man," Swedish term for Judge in the Court of Appeal).

Lagmanska, his wife.

Amalie, their daughter.

Adolf, their son-in-law.

The Neighbour.

Erich, } Children of Adolf and Amalie.
Thyra, }

The Other One (sometimes appears as a Franciscan Monk).

The Play-fellow.

The Witch.

The Prince.

Shapes and Shadows.

ADVENT

THE SCENERY

Act I

The Vineyard and the Mausoleum.

Act II

The Ante-chamber.

Act III

The Wine-cellar.

The Garden.

Act IV

The Cross-roads.

The "Waiting-room."

The Cross-roads.

The Judgment-hall.

Act V

The Ante-chamber.

The "Waiting-room."

ACT I

A Vineyard in the background.

On the left, the Mausoleum: a little white-washed brick building with door and Gothic window; a red gable-roof surmounted by a cross. A clematis with violet cruciform blossoms climbs up the wall, at the foot of which grow various flowers.

In the foreground is a peach-tree laden with fruit, under which the Lagman and the Lagmanska are sitting. The Lagman wears a green cap and is dressed in the style of 1820—yellow knee-breeches, blue coat, etc. The Lagmanska has a head-kerchief, a stick, spectacles and snuff-box. She looks like a "witch."

On the right is a small penance-chapel with a picture of the Madonna; the paling in front of it is hung with wreaths and bouquets. Before the paling is a prie-dieu.

The Lagman. The evening of life has brought us at last the sunshine which its morning promised; the early and the latter rains have blessed the fields and meadows, and the songs of the grape-treaders will soon be heard around us.

The Lagmanska. Don't talk like that! Somebody might hear it!

The Lagman. Who could be listening here, and what harm can it do, if I thank God for every good gift?

The Lagmanska. One ought not to talk of good fortune. Ill fortune may be standing and listening.

The Lagman. What would that matter? I have been born with a silver spoon in my mouth.

The Lagmanska. Do be careful! We have many enviers and evil eyes watch us.

The Lagman. Well! Let them! It has never been otherwise. But I have kept my place all the same.

The Lagmanska. Till now, yes! But I forebode evil from our Neighbour; he goes about in the village and says we have cheated him out of his property, and other things of the same kind which I will not mention. Of course that does not matter when one has a clean conscience, and a blameless life behind one. The slander

does me no harm. I go to confession and mass and am ready to close my eyes when the hour comes, in order to open them again once more and to look my Judge in the face. For I know what I shall answer Him.

The Lagman. What will you answer?

The Lagmanska. This: "Certainly, O Lord, I was not free from faults, but though I may have been a poor sinner, I was still a little better than my neighbour."

The Lagman. I don't know why you have come upon these ideas just now, and they don't please me. Is it, perhaps, because the Mausoleum is going to be consecrated soon?

The Lagmanska. Perhaps, for as a rule, I do not think about death. Haven't I still got all my teeth, isn't my hair as thick as when I was your bride?

The Lagman. Yes, yes; you have eternal youth, like myself. But we shall have to go hence some day after all, and since fortune has been kind to us we will avail ourselves of the privilege of lying in our own piece of earth. Therefore we built this little mausoleum, where every tree knows us, where every flower will whisper of our work, of our toils and of our conflicts.

The Lagmanska. Yes, conflicts against envious neighbours and ungrateful children.

The Lagman. You said it: "ungrateful children." Have you seen Adolf yet?

The Lagmanska. No, I have not seen him, since he went out this morning to try to get the money for the rent.

The Lagman. The money which he will never get, much less I. But now the time of grace is over he knows, for it is now the third quarter that he has not paid.

The Lagmanska. Yes! he must go out in the world and learn to work instead of sitting here, and playing the lazy son-in-law. I will keep Amalie and the children.

The Lagman. Do you believe that Amalie will let herself be separated from Adolf.

The Lagmanska. Oh yes, when it affects her children and her inheritance. But look! There it is again!

[*A sun-gleam appears on the wall of the Mausoleum; it quivers as though cast from running water.*]

The Lagman. What is it? What is it?

The Lagmanska. On the Mausoleum! Don't you see?

The Lagman. That is the reflection of the sun in the stream. That means——

The Lagmanska. That means that we shall still behold the sunlight for a long time.

The Lagman. Or the opposite. But no matter! A good conscience is a soft pillow, and the righteous are not deprived of their reward! Look, there is our neighbour.

(Enter the Neighbour).

The Neighbour. Good evening, Lagman and Lagmanska.

The Lagman. Good evening, Neighbour. How are you? It is a long time since I had the pleasure of seeing you. How are your vines? I ought to have asked you.

The Neighbour. Oh! the vines! They have got mildew, and then the starlings are here.

The Lagman. Heaven defend us! I have no mildew on mine, and starlings I have neither seen nor heard.

The Neighbour. Lots are unequal; one is raised, and the other cast down.

The Lagmanska. And there are good reasons for it.

The Neighbour. I see! The just do not fail of their reward, and the unjust are promptly punished.

The Lagmanska. No! not quite that!

But you must acknowledge in any case that it is strange. The two pieces of ground lie close to each other; one produces good fruit, the other bad.

The Neighbour. One has starlings, and the other none! That seems to me still more strange. All are not born with a silver spoon like the Lagman.

The Lagman. It is true what you say, and fortune has inclined towards me. I am thankful for it, and there are moments when I feel proud of it, as though I had deserved it. But listen! neighbour; you come just at the right time. The lease has fallen in, and I should like to ask you, if you care to take it.

[*The Lagmanska rises and goes up to the Mausoleum, where she busies herself with the flowers.*]

The Neighbour. So! the lease has fallen in! H'm! When was it?

The Lagman. This morning.

The Neighbour. H'm! Oh, yes. Then you are turning your son-in-law out?

The Lagman. Yes, the good-for-nothing cannot support himself.

The Neighbour. Tell me one thing, Lagman! Haven't you heard that the Government intends to make a military road through the properties here.

The Lagman. I have heard a vague report; but it is only talk.

The Neighbour. On the contrary, I have read it in the newspaper; in that case the land might be appropriated to public uses and the lessee would be the loser.

The Lagman. I cannot imagine it, and I could not bear it. What! Leave the little spot of earth where I hoped to end my days in peace, where I have prepared my resting place in order not to lie in the public cemetery!

The Neighbour. Wait! One never knows where one may come to lie, and my father who possessed this ground, also hoped to be able to rest in it, but his hopes were baulked. As regards taking up the lease, I must decline to do so.

The Lagman. As you choose. The proposal was unselfish on my part, as you are an unlucky man. It is no secret that you fail in everything that you undertake, and people have their own ideas about one who goes solitary and friendless, like you. Isn't it so? As a matter of fact, you have not a single friend.

The Neighbour. Yes, that is true. I have no friend, and that always looks bad. It cannot be denied.

The Lagman. Listen! To come to

something else, is it true, as tradition says, that this vineyard was once a battlefield and that thence the wine has its fiery quality?

The Neighbour. No, I have never heard it. My father told me it had been a place of execution, and that where the Mausoleum now is, the gallows used to stand.

The Lagman. Horrible! What made you tell me that?

The Neighbour. Well, you asked. And the last to be hung there was an unjust judge, who lies buried there with his unjustly condemned victims.

The Lagman. What wild stories!
(Calls) Caroline!

The Neighbour. And therefore he haunts the place. Have you never seen him?

The Lagman. I have seen nothing of the sort.

The Neighbour. But I have seen him and he usually comes at vintage-time, when they hear him by the wine-press down in the cellar.

The Lagman (calls) Caroline!

The Lagmanska. What is it?

The Lagman. Come here!

The Neighbour. And he will get no rest

till he has endured all the pangs which he has made his victim suffer.

The Lagman. Go away! Go!

The Neighbour. Very well. I did not know the Lagman was so sensitive. (*Goes.*)

The Lagmanska. What was it?

The Lagman. Oh! he told stories which annoyed me. But, but—he has also some evil purpose, this man!

The Lagmanska. That is what I said; but you must always gossip, when you see anyone. What had he so much to cackle about?

The Lagman. I cannot say; it makes me ill only to think about it. You shall hear it another time! See, there is Adolf.

Adolf. Good evening!

The Lagman (after a pause). Well?

Adolf. My luck is bad. I haven't been able to get any money.

The Lagman. There will be good reasons for that.

Adolf. I cannot find the reasons why it goes well with some and ill with others.

The Lagman. No? Go within yourself, examine your acts and thoughts, and you will see that you yourself are to blame for your misfortune.

Adolf. It is possible that I am not a

righteous man, but I have no unrepented sin on my conscience!

The Lagmanska. Remember carefully.

Adolf. That I believe is not necessary, for conscience already keeps watch.

The Lagman. Conscience can be lulled to sleep.

Adolf. Do you know that? I have certainly heard of villains who have grown gray in crime, but their conscience has awoken shortly before death, and I have also heard of criminals whose consciences did not awake till after death.

The Lagman (agitated). So that they went about like ghosts, you mean. Have you also heard the story? It is strange; all have heard it, except me.

The Lagmanska. What are you talking about now? You had better keep to the matter in hand.

Adolf. Yes, that is wiser. And while we are together, father-in-law, I will tell you what I propose.

The Lagman. Look here, young man. I find it more fitting that you should hear my decision, which is this. From this day forward, you have ceased to be my tenant, and before the sun sets, you go out in the world and look for work.

Adolf. Are you serious?

The Lagman. Fie! I never joke. And you cannot complain for you have twice had respites.

Adolf. And three times bad harvests; is it my fault?

The Lagman. I didn't say so; but it is still less mine. And it is not I who condemn you. Here is the contract and here the broken agreement. Have I broken the agreement? No! Then I am blameless, and I wash my hands.

Adolf. That is legal, but I expected that between relatives consideration would be shown, especially since in the ordinary course of events, this property will descend to your heirs.

The Lagmanska. Hear him! "The ordinary course of events!" He goes and waits for our decease! But look at me, you! I can still live for twenty years; and I *will* live, if only to vex you.

The Lagman (to Adolf). What coarseness, what want of humanity to say to old people in their faces. "Won't you soon die?" Fie! Fie! Now you have broken all ties, and I only say "Go and don't appear here again ever!"

Adolf. That is plain speaking, at all events. And I will go, but not alone——

The Lagmanska. Yes, you will! You

think Amalie, our daughter, will follow you on the high roads, and you will send us one child after another here. We have foreseen that, and guarded against it.

Adolf. Where is Amalie? Where?

The Lagmanska. So well disposed of that you may know it. She is on a visit to the convent of the Clarissine nuns, only on a visit. Now you know that it is not worth the trouble to look for her here.

Adolf. Some day you will pay for robbing one who is in trouble, of his only support; and if you make me break the marriage tie, you will be responsible for breaking it.

The Lagman. Fie upon you! Throwing the blame on the innocent. Go, go, hunger and thirst before closed doors till you have learnt gratitude.

Adolf. I wish you the same in double measure! Let me only say good-bye to my children, and I will go.

The Lagmanska. Since you will not spare your children the pain of parting, I will do it. In fact, I have done it already.

Adolf. That also! Now I believe all the evil reports about you, which are in circulation; and now I understand what your neighbour meant, when he said that you could not bear to see the sun!

The Lagman. Not a word more; else you will come within reach of law, and the hand of justice. (*He lifts his right hand, which lacks the index-finger*).

Adolf (*comes near and takes his hand in order to examine it*). The hand of justice!—the hand of the perjured, which lacks the finger which he laid on the Bible when he swore! Woe to you! for the day of requital has come, and your misdeeds will rise like corpses from the graves, and accuse you.

The Lagmanska. What does he say? It is as though he blew fire upon us! Go, liar! and may hell be thy reward!

Adolf. May heaven reward you—after your deserts, and God protect my children. (*Goes*).

The Lagman. What was that? Who was it that spoke? The voice seemed to me to come out of a great subterranean hall.

The Lagmanska. Did you hear it also?

The Lagman. God help us then! Do you remember what he said about the sun. That I thought was the strangest of all. How can he know that—that it is so? That I am so peculiarly constituted that the sun always burns me. They say it is

because my mother had a sunstroke when I was born, but that you also——

The Lagmanska (frightened). Hush! When one talks of the devil, he——say, hasn't the sun gone down?

The Lagman. Yes, certainly.

The Lagmanska. How is it, then, that the patch of sunlight still remains on the mausoleum?

(The sun-gleam moves).

The Lagman. Jesus! Maria! A miracle!

The Lagmanska. A miracle, say you, and on the grave! That is not an everyday occurrence, and only a certain few who have lived in faith on the highest things——

(The sun-gleam is extinguished).

The Lagman. It is uncanny here this evening; really unpleasant. What annoyed me most of all was that the good-for-nothing expected to out-live us in order to inherit the property. Do you know that I——yes, I wondered whether I should say it.

The Lagmanska. Say it!

The Lagman. Well, have you heard that this ground was once a place of execution?

The Lagmanska. You have heard that too.

The Lagman. Yes; and you knew it? Now, if we gave the ground to the convent, it would become consecrated ground, and then one might live in peace. Adolf would be also circumvented in his speculating on the inheritance. That appears to me a peculiarly happy solution of the intricate dilemma,—to give, and not to take anything.

The Lagmanska. Your excellent sense has again hit the mark, and I am of the same opinion. But supposing the land were actually appropriated by the Government, what then?

The Lagman. There is time enough to consider that afterwards. Meanwhile let us get the Mausoleum consecrated as soon as possible.

(The Franciscan Monk enters). God's peace upon you, Lagman and Lagmanska.

The Lagmanska. You come at the right moment, Father, to hear something which affects the Convent.

The Franciscan. I am glad of that (the sun-gleam appears on the Mausoleum).

The Lagmanska. And we wanted to ask when the consecration of the Mausoleum can take place.

The Franciscan (looks steadily at her).
Ah!

The Lagman. There! look Father! do you see the miraculous sign there?

The Lagmanska. Yes! is it not a holy place?

The Franciscan. That is a reflection from the water.

The Lagmanska. Is it not a good omen? Does it not mean something and counsel us pious reflection? Could not this spot become a meeting place for wanderers who seek——

The Franciscan. Frau Lagmanska, let me speak a word with you in private. (*He withdraws to the right.*)

The Lagmanska. Father!

The Franciscan (in an undertone).
Frau Lagmanska. You enjoy here a respect which you do not deserve, for you are the greatest sinner I know. You want to buy forgiveness, and you want to steal heaven. You who have already robbed the Lord.

The Lagmanska. What do you say?

The Franciscan. When you lay ill and at the point of death, you promised God to give a monstrance of pure gold to the Convent Church if you recovered. You did so, and you gave the holy vessel, but

it was of silver over-gilt. Not on account of the gold, but because of the broken vow and deceit, you are already condemned.

The Lagmanska. I didn't know it; the goldsmith deceived me.

The Franciscan. That is a lie, for I have the goldsmith's account.

The Lagmanska. Can it be forgiven?

The Franciscan. No! For to try to deceive God is a deadly sin.

The Lagman. Alas!

The Franciscan. As regards your other crimes, you can settle with yourself regarding them, but if you touch a hair of the children's heads, you will find out who protects them and feel the iron rod.

The Lagmanska. See! this fiend of a monk stands there and talks to me like that! If I am damned, I am damned. Ha! Ha!

The Franciscan. Yes, blessing will certainly not light on your house, nor will you find peace, till you have endured all the sufferings which you have caused to others.

May I say a word to the Lagman?

(The Lagman approaches.)

The Lagmanska. Tell him his sins; then we are equal.

The Franciscan. How did you come to build your Mausoleum just where the gallows used to be?

The Lagman. The Devil must have suggested the idea to me.

The Franciscan. Yes! just as he did of driving your children out on the highways and robbing them of their inheritance. You have also been an unjust judge, broken your oath, and taken bribes.

The Lagman. I?

The Franciscan. And now you want to erect a monument to yourself, and to gain a house eternal in the heavens. Listen! This ground will never be consecrated and you will think yourself happy if you are allowed to lie in the public churchyard among ordinary sinners. The curse of blood-guiltiness rests upon this ground, and it has been unjustly acquired.

The Lagman. What shall I do?

The Franciscan. Repent, and restore the stolen property.

The Lagman. I have not stolen; it has all been honestly earned.

The Franciscan. Look you! that is the worst of all—that you justify your crime; yes, I know you think you have been specially favoured by heaven because of

your righteous dealing. Yet you will see what the harvest will be; thistles and thorns will grow in your vineyard; you will wander, lonely and defenceless, and the peace of your old age will be destroyed by strife and dissension.

The Lagman. The Devil take you!

The Franciscan. Call him not;—he comes soon enough!

The Lagman. Let him come! I fear him not! I am a believer!

The Franciscan. The devils also believe, and tremble! Farewell. (*Goes.*)

The Lagman (to his wife). What did he say to you?

The Lagmanska. Do you think I am going to tell you? What did he say to you?

The Lagman. Do you think I am going to tell you?

The Lagmanska. Are you going to have secrets from me?

The Lagman. How can I tell myself? You have always had secrets from me, but I will expose your tricks once for all.

The Lagmanska. Wait a little! I will find out where you have hidden the missing money.

The Lagman. Aha! You have hid money too. It is not worth the trouble to

play the hypocrite any longer. Show yourself in all your ugliness, Witch!

The Lagmanska. I believe you have lost your senses, though you hadn't much to lose! Keep up an appearance of decency at least, if you can——

The Lagman. And preserve your beauty if you can! and your eternal youth. Ha! ha!—and your uprightness! You must have bewitched and bedazzled my sight, for now I see how hideously ugly and old you are!

*The Lagmanska (on whom the sun-
gleam now falls).* Alas! it burns me!

The Lagman. Now one can see what you really look like. (*The sun-
gleam falls on the Lagman.*) Alas! now it burns me.

The Lagmanska. And what do you look like?

(*Exeunt both on the right.*)

(*The Neighbour and Amalie enter from the left.*)

The Neighbour. Yes, my child, there is justice, human and divine, but we must have patience.

Amalie. I believe that it will come out right, although it looks bad; but I cannot, I have never been able to love my mother.

Something within me says that she is alien to me, and even hostile.

The Neighbour. Aha! You have discovered it!

Amalie. Yes, she hates me, and that a mother cannot do.

The Neighbour. Aha! Aha!

Amalie. And the fact that I cannot fulfil my duty as a daughter, and love her, makes me suffer.

The Neighbour. Well, after this suffering, when the hour of requital is come, you will learn the greatest secret of your life.

Amalie. And I could endure everything, if she were only kind to my children.

The Neighbour. Be of good comfort, for her power is at an end. The cup of her iniquity is full and runs over.

Amalie. Do you think so! Yet, it is only to-day that she has torn Adolf from us, and as you see, she has humiliated me, and made me wear clothes like a servant in order to work in the kitchen.

The Neighbour. Patience!

Amalie. Yes, you say so! To suffer deservedly I understand, but to suffer innocently——

The Neighbour. My good child, prisoners suffer deservedly, and that is no

honour, but to suffer innocently requires grace, and is a trial from which those who endure it, reap golden fruit.

Amalie. You speak so beautifully that I believe all you say! Hush! there come the children; but they must not see me dressed like this!

(She hides behind a bush.)

(Enter Erich and Thyra; the sun-gleam falls on the children alternately.)

Erich. See! the sun-gleam.

Thyra. Oh, the pretty sun! But just now it had disappeared and gone down.

Erich. Perhaps this evening it has been allowed to stay up longer for having been good during the day.

Thyra. The sun cannot be good; how stupid you are!

Erich. Yes, the sun *can* be good; it is the sun which makes the wine and the peaches.

Thyra. But then, it could give us a peach if it were good.

Erich. So it will, if we can only wait. Hasn't one fallen down?

Thyra (looks on the ground). No, but we can go near the tree.

Erich. No, we mustn't, because of grandmother.

Thyra. Grandmother said we musn't

shake the tree, but I think we may play round the tree till one falls of itself.

Erich. How stupid you are! That comes to the same thing! (*Looks up into the tree.*) Ah! if only a peach would fall!

Thyra. It won't fall unless we shake the tree.

Erich. Thyra! don't speak so! That is sinful!

Thyra. Shall we pray God that one may fall?

Erich. One may not ask God for anything good—I mean, good to eat. Ah! little peach, fall! fall! (*A peach falls from the tree; Erich picks it up.*) See! how kind the tree was!

Thyra. Yes! but we ought to divide it fairly, for I was the first who said that one ought to shake the tree.

(*The Lagmanska enters with a great stick.*) Aha! there you are, shaking the tree! Come! you wicked children, I'll give it you.

Erich. No, grandmother, we have not shaken the tree.

The Lagmanska. Aha! You lie too. Didn't I hear Thyra say "one ought to shake the tree?" Come now, I will shut you up in the cellar, where you will see

neither sun nor moon shine.

Amalie (comes forward). The children are innocent, mother.

The Lagmanska. That's nice!—to stand behind a bush and listen and then teach your children to tell falsehoods!

The Neighbour (comes forward). She only told the truth.

The Lagmanska. Two witnesses behind a bush! It's just like a trial in court. But look you! I'm up to your tricks, and what I have heard and seen is good enough evidence for me! Come, children.

Amalie. Mother, it's a sin and a shame!

The Neighbour (lays his finger on his mouth, with a sign to Amalie).

Amalie (to the children). Don't cry, little ones! Obey grandmother,—it won't hurt you. It is better to suffer evil than to do evil, and I know you are innocent. God protect you, and don't forget your evening prayer.

(The Lagmanska goes off with the children.)

Amalie. It is difficult to believe, but it is sweet to be able to do so.

The Neighbour. Is it so difficult to believe what is good of God, when He wishes only what is for our best?

Amalie. Give me some great good word of comfort for the night that may serve as a pillow for my head to sleep upon.

The Neighbour. You shall have it. Let me think. Listen. Isaac was doomed to be sacrificed.

Amalie. No! No!

The Neighbour. Be calm! Isaac was doomed to be sacrificed, but he was not sacrificed.

Amalie. Thanks! thanks! and good-night! (*Exit on the right.*)

The Neighbour. Good-night, my child. (*Retires slowly to the back-ground.*)

(*A procession of shadows issues from the Mausoleum, with a distance of five or six paces between every two; they pass noiselessly by: Death, with a sickle and hour-glass; the White Lady, fair, tall and slim, wearing a ring on her finger set with a brilliant emerald; the Goldsmith, with the silver-gilt monstrance; the Beheaded Sailor with his head in his band; the Auctioneer, with hammer and notebook; the Chimney-sweep, with cord, scraper and brush; the Fool bearing his cap with donkey's ears and bells on a pole, with the inscription "the cap of victory"; the Land-surveyor, with plank and tripod;*

the Judge, exactly resembling the Lagman, and dressed like him, with a rope round his neck; his lifted right hand has the index finger missing. As the procession enters, it grows dark; and the stage is empty while it proceeds.)

The Lagman (enters from the left, followed by the Lagmanska). What are you doing so late, wandering about like a ghost?

The Lagmanska. What are you doing?

The Lagman. I could not sleep.

The Lagmanska. Why not?

The Lagman. I do not know. I thought I heard children crying in the cellar.

The Lagmanska. Impossible! Oh, no! That is not it. You dare not sleep, because you are afraid lest I should go and search your hiding-place.

The Lagman. And you feared I would rummage in yours. This is a pleasant old age for Philemon and Baucis.

The Lagmanska. At any rate, no gods come to visit them.

The Lagman. No! not gods exactly.

(The Procession re-issues from the Mausoleum, passing on towards the right.)

The Lagmanska. Mary! Mother of God! what is that?

The Lagman. Heaven preserve us!

(A pause.)

The Lagmanska. Pray! Pray for us!

The Lagman. I have tried, but I cannot.

The Lagmanska. Nor I! I have no words and no thoughts.

(A pause.)

The Lagman. How does the Lord's Prayer begin?

The Lagmanska. I have forgotten it, but I knew it this morning.

(A pause.)

The Lagmanska. Who is the White Lady?

The Lagman. It is Amalie's mother, the memory of whom you wished to obliterate.

The Lagmanska. Are they shadows or ghosts, or our own bad dreams?

The Lagman *(takes out his pocket-knife)*. It is the devil's jugglery! I will throw the steel at them! Open the blade, Caroline; I cannot, you see!

The Lagmanska. Yes, I see that isn't easy without a forefinger. But I cannot open it either!

(Loses the knife.)

The Lagman. Alas! no steel is any use

here. Alas! There is the beheaded sailor! Let us go!

The Lagmanska. That is easily said; but I cannot stir from the spot!

The Lagman. And I feel as though I were nailed to the ground! No, I will not see any more. (*Places his hand before his eyes.*)

The Lagmanska. But what *are* they—mists from the ground or shadows of the trees?

The Lagman. No! it is we who see visions. There I go in person, and yet I am standing here. If I could only sleep one night, I would snap my fingers at them. The Devil! Will it never come to an end?

The Lagmanska. Why do you look at them, then?

The Lagman. I see through my hand; I see in the dark through my eyelids.

The Lagmanska. Well, now it is at an end.

(*The procession is over.*)

The Lagman. Praise be—but I cannot say the name. How can we sleep to-night. We must send for the doctor.

The Lagmanska. Or, perhaps, for Father Colomba.

The Lagman. He cannot help, and the

one who could, will not. So may The Other One do it!

The Other One comes from behind the chapel of the Madonna. He appears lean and emaciated; wears his brown hair parted, has a thin beard like tow; old shabby clothes without any linen; a red woollen scarf round his neck; spectacles, and a cane under his arm.

The Lagman. Who is that?

The Other One (in an undertone). I am the Other One.

The Lagman (to Lagmanska). Make the sign of the cross. I—I cannot.

The Other One. The sign of the cross does not frighten me, for I am going through my time of probation in order to be able to bear it.

The Lagman. Who are you?

The Other One. I became the second, because I wished to be the first; I was a bad man, and as a punishment, had to serve the good.

The Lagman. Then you are not the Evil One?

The Other One. Yes, I am, and I am commissioned to drive you by pain to the Cross, where we shall hereafter meet.

The Lagmanska. Don't listen to him! Ask him to go.

The Other One. It is no good! You have summoned me and must put up with me.

(The Lagman and the Lagmanska go out on the right, The Other One follows them.)

ACT II

A large white-washed room with a ceiling of black timber, and deep narrow unbarred windows. Furniture of all sorts, cheffoniers, cupboards, boxes, and tables are piled up together. On them are placed silver services, candelabras, candlesticks, centre-pieces, vases, statuettes, etc.

A door in the background; on each side of it hang portraits of the Lagman and the Lagmanska. By a small work-table with a chair stands a harp. Amalie stands by a table on the right and scours a silver coffee-service. The sun shines in through the window in the back-ground.

The Neighbour (entering). Well, my child, how are you getting on with patience?

Amalie. Thank you, Neighbour, pretty well. But this silver service is the hardest job I have had to do. I have been scouring it for half an hour, and it won't come clean.

The Neighbour. That is strange, but there must be some good reason for it, as the Lagman says. Did you sleep well, last night?

Amalie. Yes, thanks, very well. But do you know father was outside all night in the vineyard with the rattles?

The Neighbour. Yes, I heard it. What silly idea had got into his head?

Amalie. He thought he heard the starlings coming to eat the grapes.

The Neighbour. Poor man! There are no starlings there at night! How about the children?

Amalie. Ah, the children. She has them still in the cellar; I only hope she won't forget to give them their food.

The Neighbour. Amalie, He who feeds the birds, will not forget the children. And now I will tell you something of which one otherwise should not speak. There is a small ventilator between my wine-cellar and the Lagman's. This morning when I went down to air the cellar, I heard voices. And when I looked through the hole, I saw Erich and Thyra playing with a little stranger.

Amalie. You saw them, Neighbour?
And——

The Neighbour. They were well and cheerful.

Amalie. Who, then, was their play-fellow?

The Neighbour. That I can't imagine.

Amalie. The whole of this dreadful house is full of secrets.

The Neighbour. That is true, but it is not our business to search into them.

The Lagman (enters with a rattle). The Neighbour is here, plotting against me. Is it not enough that he has brought starlings into my vineyard with his evil eye. An evil eye he certainly has, but I can soon put it out. I also can do tricks.

The Neighbour (to Amalie). Is it worth while to explain to him? He does not believe what one says! *(Goes.)*

Amalie. Here we can do nothing.

The Lagman. Amalie, have you noticed where your mother generally goes and searches when she thinks herself alone?

Amalie. No, father?

The Lagman. I saw by your eyes that you knew. You looked in this direction. *(He approaches a desk but steps into the sunlight.)* The cursed sun! It ought to be burnt! *(He goes and lowers a window curtain and turns again to the desk.)* It ought to be here! Let us see! I will

look in the most unlikely place, for she is the most cunning of women; for instance, here in the perfume-basket. Quite right! (*He takes out bank-notes and securities.*) What is this? Twelve English bank-notes worth a pound each. Twelve! Ha! Ha! One can imagine the rest! (*Hides the papers.*) But what is that noise outside! It is the starlings again! (*Goes to the open window and springs the rattle.*)

The Lagmanska (entering). What are you doing there?

The Lagman. Aren't you in the kitchen?

The Lagmanska. No, as you see. (*To Amalie*) Have you finished cleaning?

Amalie. No, mother, for the silver won't come clean. It must be sham.

The Lagmanska. Sham? Let me see. Certainly the silver is black enough. (*To the Lagman, who has let down another window-blind*) Where did you get this set from?

The Lagman. I got it from the house of someone who had died.

The Lagmanska. Because you undertook to make the inventory!

The Lagman. Don't use insulting ex-

pressions which may put you within reach of the law.

The Lagmanska. Is he mad, or I?

The Lagman. Besides, it is silver, hall-marked silver.

The Lagmanska. Then it is Amalie's fault.

A Voice (calling in through the window). The Lagman can make white black, but he cannot make black white.

The Lagman. Who said that?

The Lagmanska. It seemed to me a starling who spoke.

The Lagman (letting down the remaining blind). Now the sun has come round here; I thought it was there just now.

The Lagmanska (to Amalie). Who was it that spoke?

Amalie. I think it was the new school-master with the red scarf.

The Lagman. Pah! Let us talk of something else.

(Enter a Maid) The breakfast is ready. *(Goes.)*

(Pause.)

The Lagmanska. Go down and eat, Amalie.

Amalie. Thank you, mother. *(Goes.)*

(The Lagman sits down on a chair by a box.)

The Lagmanska (approaching the desk on which the perfume-basket stands).
Won't you go and eat?

The Lagman. No, I am not hungry.
Won't you go?

The Lagmanska. I have just eaten.
(Pause.)

The Lagman (takes a piece of bread out of his pocket). Then excuse my eating.

The Lagmanska. There is venison on the table.

The Lagman. What nonsense you are talking!

The Lagmanska. You think that I would poison the food?

The Lagman. Yes, I do; for it tasted of creosote this morning.

The Lagmanska. And what I ate tasted of lead——

The Lagman. If I assure you that I have put nothing in your food——

The Lagmanska. I don't believe you.
And if I assert——

The Lagman. I don't believe you.
(Eats his bread.) Venison is good, I can smell it here, but bread is not bad.

(Pause.)

The Lagmanska. Why do you sit there and keep watch over the box?

The Lagman. For the same reason that you guard the perfume-basket.

The Lagmanska. Ah! you have been at it, burglar!

The Lagman. Corpse-robber!

The Lagmanska. Think! Such words between us! Us! (*Weeps.*)

The Lagman. Yes, the world is wicked, and people are bad.

The Lagmanska. Yes, you may well say that, and they are ungrateful to boot. Ungrateful children who steal one's lease, ungrateful grand-children who steal the fruit from the tree. You are right; the world is bad——

The Lagman. Who can know it better than I who have seen all kinds of disgrace and have been obliged to pass the death-sentence. Therefore the people hate me as though I had made the law.

The Lagmanska. What people say, signifies nothing so long as one has a clean conscience——

(*Three knocks are heard in the large cupboard.*)

What is it? Who is there?

The Lagman. It was the cupboard. It always cracks in rainy weather.

(*Three distinct knocks are again heard.*)

The Lagmanska. This is some trick of that wandering mountebank's.

(The cover of the coffee kettle, which Amalie has just scoured, flies open and falls again several times.)

The Lagman. What is that?

The Lagmanska. These are the black arts of this wizard, but he cannot frighten me.

(The beer-can clinks.)

The Lagman. You believe it is magnetism?

The Lagmanska. Yes, as they call it nowadays——

The Lagman. It may be so, but how can he know our secrets.

The Lagmanska. Secrets? What do you mean?

(The clock strikes a great many times.)

The Lagman. This makes me nervous.

The Lagmanska. Devil take me if I stay here any longer!

(The sun-gleam falls on the Lagmanska's portrait.)

You see! It knows the secret, too!

The Lagman. You mean that there is a portrait of *her* behind yours.

The Lagmanska. Come on! Let us go down and eat. Later on let us discuss

selling the place and everything belonging to it, at an auction——

The Lagman. Yes, you are right. Let us sell up every stick and stone, make a clean sweep of the old and begin a new life! Let us go and eat!

(The Other appears in the door-way.)

(The Lagman and the Lagmanska start back.)

The Lagman. This is no ordinary man!

The Lagmanska. Speak to him!

The Lagman (to The Other). Who are you?

The Other. I have told you twice, but your incredulity is one of your punishments, for if you believed me it would shorten your sufferings.

The Lagman (to the Lagmanska). It is he. I am freezing to ice. How shall we get rid of him? They say that unclean spirits cannot bear the sound of music. Play on the harp to him, Caroline.

(The Lagmanska sits down nervously at the table, takes the harp, and plays a solemn overture in a minor key.)

(The Other listens attentively and with emotion.)

The Lagmanska (to the Lagman). Has he gone?

The Other. Thank you, Madam, for the

music; it deadens grief and awakens memories of better things, even in a lost soul. Thank you, Madam. As regards the auction, I believe you are quite right, although I think it would be better honestly to declare yourselves bankrupt; yes, to give up all claims and to let each have his own.

The Lagman. Bankrupt! I have no debts!

The Other. No debts!

The Lagmanska. My husband has no debts.

The Other. No debts! Who is so fortunate as that?

The Lagman. Yes, it is so. Others owe me debts——

The Other. Forgive them then!

The Lagman. It is not a question of forgiveness but of payment.

The Other. Very well. Then you will have to pay! Farewell for the present. We shall often meet again, and finally at the Great Auction. (*Goes out backwards.*)

The Lagman. The sun makes him nervous, too! Ha! Ha!

The Other. For the present, yes. But when I have once become accustomed to

the light, I shall hate the darkness!
(Exit.)

The Lagmanska (to the Lagman) ,
you think that that—is the Other one.

The Lagman. That is not his traditional aspect, but times change, and we with them. Formerly he was said to bestow fame and gold, but now he comes and asks——

The Lagmanska. He is an ass and a mountebank, that is all! A creature who dares not bite although he would like to.

The Other (re-appears in the door).
Beware of me! Beware!

The Lagman (raising his right hand).
Beware yourself.

The Other raises his hand and makes as though he were firing a pistol. Away!

The Lagman (staring fixedly at his gesture). Alas!

The Other. You have never believed in good, now you shall believe in evil. Look you! The All-good cannot do evil, therefore he leaves it to such wretches as I am. But to make things more certain, you shall torture each other and yourselves.

The Lagmanska (kneeling before the Other). Spare us! Help us! Mercy.

The Other (making a gesture of rend-

ing his clothes). Stand up! Alas! There is only One to whom you should pray. Stand up, or——*Now*, you believe me, although I have no red cap and sword and purse, and cannot make jokes; but beware of making a jest of me. I am as serious as sin and severe as retribution. I have not come to lure you with offers of gold and honour, but to scourge you with rods and scorpions. (*The clock strikes as before; it grows dark.*) Your time is hurrying to a close, therefore set your house in order, for you must die. (*Thunder is heard as if a storm had begun.*) Whose voice speaks now? Say, and try to frighten Him with a rattle when He blasts your vintage. Storm and Hail is his name, and he carries devastation in His wings, and punishment in His grasp. Now put on your “cap of victory” and arm yourself with a good conscience. (*The rattle of hail is heard.*)

The Lagman. Mercy!

The Other One. Yes, if thou promisest reformation.

The Lagman. I vow and swear——

The Other One. Thou canst not swear, for thou hast already sworn falsely. But promise, first of all, to free the children——and then all the rest.

The Lagman. I promise! Before the sun goes down the children shall be here.

The Other One. That is the first step forward, but if thou turnest back, thou shalt see that I rightly bear my title; for my name is Legion!

(Lifts his cane and the Lagman is released from his paralytic cramp.)

ACT III

Scene I

A wine-cellar with a row of casks on the left and right. An iron door in the background. The casks are marked with different signs; on the first are small trays on which stand glasses. On the right in the foreground is a wine-press and a couple of straw-bottomed chairs. Flasks, funnels, siphons, etc., are lying here and there.

Erich and Thyra are sitting by the wine-press.

Erich. It is dull here.

Thyra. That is because grandmother is horrid.

Erich. You should not speak so!

Thyra. Maybe! But she is horrid.

Erich. Thyra, don't talk so! for then the little Boy won't come again and play with us.

Thyra. Very well, then, I won't speak so, any more. If it were only not so dark.

Erich. Don't you remember that the Boy said we should not complain.

Thyra. Then I won't do it any more.
(*The sun-gleam appears on the ground.*)
Oh! see the sun-shine! She jumps up and stands in it.

Erich. Thyra, don't tread on the sun-light! That is wrong.

Thyra. No! I don't tread on it on purpose. I only want to have it near me. See! now I have it in my arms and now I stroke it. No! see it kisses me on the mouth.

(*The Playfellow comes forward from behind a cask. He is dressed in a white tunic reaching down to the knee, with a blue sash. He is fair and wears sandals. As he enters, the cellar grows light.*)

Erich (*goes towards him*). Good morning little one. Come and greet him, Thyra. What is your name, young one? To-day you must tell us.

(*The Playfellow looks at him.*)

Thyra. Erich, don't be so meddling! You make him shy. Who is your father, little one?

The Playfellow. Don't be so curious. When you have learnt to know me better,

you will find out all that. But now, let us play.

Thyra. Yes, but not something instructive; that is so dull. It must only be pretty.

The Playfellow (smiling). Shall I tell you a story?

Thyra. Yes, but not one of the Bible stories, for we know them by heart.

(The Playfellow smiles.)

Erich. Thyra, you vex him by talking so.

The Playfellow. No, little friend, I am not vexed. But if you are quite good now, we will go out and play.

Erich. Oh, yes! Oh, yes! But we cannot because of grandmother.

The Playfellow. Yes, you can! Grandmother has said that she would like to see you free, and therefore let us go, before she changes her mind. Come!

Thyra. Oh, how jolly! Oh!

The door in the back-ground opens; outside is a yellow sunlit rye-field with cornflowers and daisies.

The Playfellow. Come, children! Come out in the sun and be happy!
(They go out; the door shuts of itself.)

(Pause.)

(Enter the Lagman with a lantern, and the Lagmanska with a rod.)

The Lagmanska. Here it is dark and cool; and one is not plagued by the sun.

The Lagman. Yes, and it is quiet too. But where are the children? *(They look for them.)*

The Lagman. I believe we have been taken at our word.

The Lagmanska. We? *I* promised nothing, for he—you know—spoke at the end only to you.

The Lagman. That may be, but this time we had to obey, for I don't want to be frightened any more with showers of hail and that sort of thing. Meanwhile the children are not here, and they will soon come again, when they are hungry.

The Lagmanska. And then I congratulate them! *(The rod is snatched out of her hand, and disappears behind a cask.)* There are the tricks again!

The Lagman. Well now, submit, and do as he—you know who—says. I, for my part, cannot do any more wrong. The vines are spoiled, and one must be thankful for what one has under cover. Come here, Caroline, we will strengthen ourselves with a glass of something good. *(He draws some wine from a cask into a*

glass.) This belongs to the comet year 1869, when the great comet came, and people said it prophesied war. And war there was. (*He offers the Lagmanska a full glass.*)

The Lagmanska. You drink first!

The Lagman. No; do you think that there is poison also in this?

The Lagmanska. I don't think so now, but we shall never have any peace or happiness again.

The Lagman. Do as I do; submit! (*He drinks.*)

The Lagmanska. I should like to do so, and try to also, but when I think how badly others have treated us, I feel as good as they are. (*Drinks.*) That is a good wine. (*Sits down.*)

The Lagman. The wine is good and raises the spirits. Yes, the wise man says we are all on the same level, and I cannot understand why one should lord it over others. (*Drinks.*) I, for my part, have always acted legally, that is according to valid laws and prescripts; if others were ignorant of the law, that is their fault, for no one ought to be ignorant of it. Thus, if Adolf does not pay his rent, he is the law-breaker, not I.

The Lagmanska. You get the blame,

however, and are regarded as a criminal. But is it not as I say? there is no more justice in the world. If you did what was right, you would take proceedings against Adolf and evict the whole family, but it is not yet too late. (*Drinks.*)

The Lagman. Yes, you see, if I wished to act completely in accordance with law, I would insist on the dissolution of his marriage, and then he would be disinherited.

The Lagmanska. Well, do it then.

The Lagman (looking round). N—No—Yes! It would certainly be going to work thoroughly. Separation would not be granted, but the marriage might be declared null on the ground of informalities.

The Lagmanska. Were there any then?

The Lagman (a little flushed with wine). One can always find informalities, if one looks for them.

The Lagmanska. Very well! This good-for-nothing waits for our death, but now let him give himself airs with the law of nature which drives drones out into the street.

The Lagman. Ha! Ha! You are right, right! And do you know, when I consider the matter exactly, what have we to reproach ourselves with, what ill have we

done? That matter about the monstrance is too trivial to talk about, and has injured nobody; and to say that I have perjured myself, is simply a lie. I only had a whitlow in my finger, and that was quite natural.

The Lagmanska. Yes, I am quite sure of that—and as to the hailstorm that is as easy to explain as if it were set down in the almanack.

The Lagman. So I think also. Therefore, Caroline, the best thing would be to forget that last silly talk, and apply to another priest to have the Mausoleum consecrated.

The Lagmanska. Why not?

The Lagman. Why not? Perhaps because this mesmeriser goes about squawking.

The Lagmanska. Tell me, do you think he is only a mesmeriser?

The Lagman (braggingly). He! He is a charlatan of the first order. A charla-tan!

The Lagmanska (looking round). I am not so sure.

The Lagman. But I am. Sure. And if he came before my eyes, now for example, I would drink to him and say, "Your health! old thief!"

(His lifted glass is snatched out of his hand and disappears.)

What is that? *(The lantern is extinguished.)*

The Lagmanska. Help!

(There is a sound of a storm-wind and then it is still.)

The Lagman. Only get some matches and I will clear this up. For now I fear nothing. Nothing!

The Lagmanska. Yes, yes. If you escape with your life—— *(Goes.)*

The Lagman. Be quiet! Be quiet!

The Other One *(comes from behind a cask).* Now we will speak alone together.

The Lagman *(frightened).* Where have you come from?

The Other One. That doesn't concern you.

The Lagman *(rising).* Why do you talk like that?

The Other One. It is your style of talk. Off with your cap! *(Blows on the Lagman, whose cap falls off.)* Listen now to your sentence. You have wished to separate what He *(Whose name I cannot mention)* has joined together. Therefore you shall be separated from the support of your old age, and run the gauntlet

alone, and alone suffer the tortures of sleeplessness.

The Lagman. Is that merciful?

The Other. That is justice, that is the law. Eye for eye and tooth for tooth. The Gospel speaks differently but you refuse to listen to that. Up and run! (*Lifts his cane in the air.*)

Scene II

A garden with cypresses clipped in the shape of obelisks, candelabras, vases, etc. Underneath them grow roses, hollyhocks, and digitalis. In the midst is a spring over which leans a gigantic fuchsia (Christi sanguis) in bloom. In the background a yellow field of ripe rye with cornflowers and daisies: with a scarecrow in the middle. Far in the distance are seen vineyards and rocks of light yellow slate, with beech-woods and ruins of castles. There is a high-road in the back-ground; on the right a covered arched way of foliage. Before it a Madonna and child.

(Enter the Playfellow, holding Erich and Thyra by the hand.)

Erich. Oh! how pretty! oh!

Thyra. Who lives here?

The Playfellow. Those whom it suits, are here at home.

Thyra. Can we play here?

The Playfellow. Everywhere, except in the alley on the right.

Erich. And we can pick flowers, too?

The Playfellow. You can pick any flowers, but don't touch the fuchsia by the spring, little friends.

Thyra. What sort of a plant is that?

Erich. That is (*lowering his voice*) "Christi Sanguis," I know.

Thyra. Erich, you should make the sign of the Cross when you name God's name.

Erich (crossing himself). Tell us, little boy, why must we not touch the plant?

Thyra. Erich, don't be so inquisitive, but obey! But tell us, little boy, what is the ugly scarecrow there for? Cannot we take it away?

The Playfellow. Yes, take it away if you like, then the birds will come and sing to us.

(*Erich and Thyra hurry to the background, and pull the scarecrow down.*)

Erich. Get away with you, ugly scarecrow! Come now little birds and eat.

(The gold-bird flies in from the right and settles on the fuchsia.)

Thyra. Oh, how pretty he is! Can he sing too?

(The gold-bird gives a call like the cuckoo.)

Erich. Do you understand, little boy, what the bird sings?

The Playfellow. No, songs are the birds' little secrets, and they have the right to keep them to themselves.

Thyra. Yes, Erich! Else the children would find out where their nest is, and then they would go and take their eggs, and then the birds would be so sad and could have no more little ones.

Erich. Thyra, you are very knowing!

The Playfellow (lays his finger on his mouth). Hush! Someone is coming! Let us see if he suits us or not.

(Enter a little chimney-sweep, stands bewildered, and stares.)

The Playfellow. Well, little boy, won't you come and play with us?

The Little Chimney-sweep (takes off his cap, embarrassed). You won't play with me.

The Playfellow. Why not?

The Chimney-sweep. I am so sooty;

and besides I cannot play; I don't know what that is.

Thyra. Think! the poor little boy has never played.

The Playfellow. What is your name?

The Chimney-sweep. Name? They call me Olle, but——

The Playfellow. What is your other name?

The Chimney-sweep. Other name? I haven't got any other.

The Playfellow. Who is your father?

The Chimney-sweep. I haven't got one.

The Playfellow. Your mother?

The Chimney-sweep. I don't know.

The Playfellow. He has no father nor mother. Come, little boy, to the spring, and then you will be as white as a young prince.

The Chimney-sweep. If anyone else had said so, I would not have believed it.

The Playfellow. How is it that you believe me, then?

The Chimney-sweep. I don't know, but I think you look as if it were true.

The Playfellow. Thyra, give the little boy your hand! Will you give him a kiss too?

Thyra (hesitates at first). Yes, if you

ask me too! (*Kisses the Chimney-sweep.*)

The Playfellow (*dips his hand in the spring and sprinkles the chimney-sweep's face; his black mask falls off*). See! now you are white! Go now behind that rose-bush, and you will get new clothes.

The Chimney-sweep. Why do I get all this which I have not deserved?

The Playfellow. Because you think you did not deserve it.

The Chimney-sweep (*goes behind the rose-bush*). I thank you, although I don't understand your meaning.

Thyra. Why was the little boy made a chimney-sweep? Because he was naughty?

The Playfellow. No; but he had a naughty guardian who sent him out into the world to shift for himself. See how fine he looks now!

(*The Chimney-sweep comes forward in gay summer clothes.*)

The Playfellow. Go now to the harbour-walk and you will find someone who loves you, and will make much of you.

The Chimney-sweep. Who can make much of me?

The Play-fellow. Look!

(*The Chimney-sweep goes to the*

harbour-walk, where a lady dressed in white meets him and embraces him.)

Thyra. Who lives there?

The Playfellow (*putting his finger to his mouth*). Are you curious to know? But who comes there?

(The Lagmanska enters on the high road with a sack on her back, and a stick in her hand.)

Erich. It is grandmother! Now we are done for!

Thyra. Alas! It is grandmother!

The Playfellow. Keep quiet, children. I will take the blame on myself.

Erich. No! you cannot, for then they will beat you.

The Playfellow. Well! cannot I take blows for my friends?

Erich. No! I will take them.

Thyra. And I too.

The Playfellow. Hush! Come here and you will escape scolding. (*They hide themselves.*)

The Lagmanska (*advancing to the spring*). Here is the famous spring which is said to cure everything—of course, since the angel has touched it! But it is all a lie. But one can at any rate quench thirst there, and water is water! (*She stoops over the spring.*) But what do I see?

Erich and Thyra with a strange play-fellow! What does that mean? For they are not here? This must be a magic spring. (*She takes her cup, fills it and drinks.*) Faugh! it tastes of copper! Can he have been here and poisoned the water too? Everything is poisoned! Everything! Everything! I am tired, although my age has not affected me otherwise. (*She looks at her reflection in the spring with an air of satisfaction.*) On the contrary, I look quite young—but it is difficult to walk and still harder to rise. (*She makes efforts to get on her legs*). My God, my God, have mercy on me, otherwise I must remain lying.

The Playfellow (*signs to the children to remain where they are; then goes and wipes the perspiration from the Lagmanska's forehead*). Stand up and don't be wicked any more.

The Lagmanska (*rising*). Who is that? Ah! that is the fine fellow, who entices my children in evil ways!

The Playfellow. Go! ungrateful woman! I wipe the perspiration from your forehead, and lift you up when you had fallen down, and you scold me in return. Go! Go!

(*The Lagmanska looks at him in*

astonishment; then she casts her eyes down, turns and goes out.)

(Erich and Thyra come forward.)

Erich. But it is a pity about grandmother anyhow, although she is horrid.

Thyra. This is dull, and I will go home.

The Playfellow. Wait a little. Don't be impatient. See, there comes someone else we know.

(The Lagman enters on the high road.)

The Playfellow. He cannot come here and defile the spring. *(He motions with his hand; a sun-gleam falls on the Lagman, so that he turns and goes out.)* It is good of you, children, to be sorry for the old people, but you must believe that I am acting justly. Do you?

Erich and Thyra. Yes, we believe you.

Thyra. But I should like to go home to mother.

The Playfellow. You will be able to.

(The Other One appears in the background and goes behind the bushes.)

The Playfellow. For I must go now. The Angelus will soon be ringing.

Erich. Where are you going then?

The Playfellow. I have other children to play with, far away where you cannot

come. But if I leave you now here, don't forget what I told you about not touching the Fuchsia-plant.

Erich. We will obey! We will! But don't go; it will soon be dark.

The Playfellow. Never mind! A boy who has a good conscience and can say his evening-prayers need not be afraid of anything.

Thyra. When will you come back to us, little boy?

The Playfellow. I will come again at Christmas, and every Christmas! Good-night, little friends. *(He kisses them on the forehead, and retires towards the background between the bushes; when he reappears in the background, he carries a little cross with a flag. The Angelus begins to ring. The Playfellow lifts the flag and signs to the children; a clear white light shines round him, and he disappears.)*

(Erich and Thyra kneel and pray silently while the Angelus is ringing.)

Erich (crossing himself). Do you know, Thyra, who the boy was?

Thyra. That was the Saviour.

(The Other One comes forward.)

Thyra is frightened and flies to Erich, who protects her with his arms. Oh! Oh!

Erich (to the Other One). What do you want, you horrid thing?

The Other One. I only wanted——
Look at me!

Erich. Yes!

The Other One. I look like this because I once touched the plant; and then I took pleasure in tempting others to do it. But now that I am old, I have repented, and now I go among men, and warn them, but now no one believes me—no one, because I once lied.

Erich. You do not need to warn us, for you cannot entice us.

The Other One. Oho! Don't be so proud, little friend! Otherwise you are a fine fellow.

Erich. Go your way then; I won't listen to you any more. And you frighten my sister.

The Other One. I will go, for I don't belong here, and I have business elsewhere. Farewell, children.

Amalie's voice on the right. Erich and Thyra!

Erich and Thyra. Oh, that is mama!
Dear mama!

(Amalie enters. Erich and Thyra spring in her arms. The Other One looks on with emotion and goes.)

ACT IV

Scene I

Cross-roads in a pine-forest. Moonlight.

The Witch sitting and waiting.

The Lagmanska. There at last! There you are!

The Witch. You have kept me waiting; why have you called me?

The Lagmanska. Help me.

The Witch. How?

The Lagmanska. Against my enemies.

The Witch. There is only one help against your enemies; do them good.

The Lagmanska. The deuce it is! I think the world has been turned upside down.

The Witch. Yes, so it seems.

The Lagmanska. Even the Other One—you know whom I mean—himself is changed.

The Witch. Then, you may have your turn too.

The Lagmanska. You mean that I am getting old, yet it is not more than three weeks since I danced at a wedding.

The Witch. If that is what you like, you can have plenty of it, for there will be a ball here to-night, though I cannot take part in it.

The Lagmanska. Here?

The Witch. Just here; it begins when I choose.

The Lagmanska. What a pity that I have not my low-bodied dress with me.

The Witch. I can lend you one, and dancing-shoes also with red heels.

The Lagmanska. Perhaps you can also find me gloves and a fan.

The Witch. Everything, and especially several young cavaliers who will call you "queen of the ball."

The Lagmanska. Now you are joking.

The Witch. No, I am not, and I know that just in these balls, they have always good taste enough to choose the best queen—by "best" I mean the worthiest.

The Lagmanska. You mean the most beautiful.

The Witch. No, I don't, but the worthiest. Would you like me to give the signal for the ball now?

The Lagmanska. Yes, gladly, as far as I am concerned.

The Witch. Go a little to one side, and you will find your lady's maid, while the dancing hall is being got ready.

The Lagmanska (*going off by the right wing*). Fancy! a lady's maid, too. Do you know that that was the dream of my youth, which has never yet been fulfilled.

The Witch. You see "what one wishes for in youth, one has abundance of in age."* (*Blows on a whistle.*)

Scene II

The scene changes to the bottom of a deep valley; in the background and on the sides are steep black rocks without vegetation. To the left in the foreground the throne of the queen of the ball. To the right, the orchestra. In the middle of the stage a statue of Pan surrounded by plants in pots,—hen-bane, wood-broom, thistles, onions, etc.

The musicians enter, dressed in gray, with white sad faces, and weary gestures;

* A saying of Goethe.

they appear to tune their instruments, although no sound is heard.

The ball-guests come in, drawing on black gloves; they consist of cripples, beggars and tramps. They move slowly, like undertakers.

The Other One acts as master of the ceremonies; he appears as a septuagenarian beau, wearing a black peruke, which lets his gray hair appear beneath; he has a waxed moustache, an eye-glass, a frock-coat which he has outgrown, and top-boots; he seems depressed at the part which he has to play.

The Seven Deadly Sins enter and range themselves round the throne—Pride, Lechery, Gluttony, Avarice, Anger, Envy, Sloth.

The Prince enters; he is a hump-back, wearing a soiled velvet jacket with bright buttons; he has a sword, lace collar, and spurs on his boots.

The whole following scene is played in serious earnest without a trace of irony, satire or humour. The figures move soundlessly on felt-soles, and their faces look like death-masks.

The Prince (to the Master of Ceremonies). Why do you disturb my rest thus at mid-night?

The Master of Ceremonies. You always ask "why?" brother. Have you had no light on the subject?

The Prince. Only partially. I see a connection between my suffering and my guilt, but I do not understand why I should suffer for ever, since He has suffered in my stead.

The Master of Ceremonies. For ever! You died yesterday; then time ceased for you, and therefore some hours seem to you like eternity.

The Prince. Yesterday?

The Master of Ceremonies. Yes! but since you were proud, and would have no help in your suffering, you must manage to bear it yourself.

The Prince. What have I done then?

The Master of Ceremonies. Wonderful question!

The Prince. No, but tell me!

The Master of Ceremonies. Since it is our business to torment one another with the truth—we were, remember, famous truth-tellers in life—I will tell you part of your secret. You were and are still a hump-back——

The Prince. What is that?

The Master of Ceremonies. Look!

You do not know what all the others knew. They all sympathised with you, and therefore you never came to hear the name of your deformity.

The Prince. What deformity is that? You mean perhaps that I have a "weak chest," but that is no deformity.

The Master of Ceremonies. Yes, "weak chest" is *your* name for it. Well: men ignored your bodily defect, and sought to modify your misfortune by pity and friendliness, but you took their kindness as a tribute due to you, and their encouraging words as admiration of your personal excellences. Finally, your self-love grew to such a pitch, that you regarded yourself as a type of manly beauty, and when a woman loved you out of pity, you thought yourself an irresistible conqueror.

The Prince. What right have you to stand here and talk so impertinently?

The Master of Ceremonies. Right! I fulfil the sad duty of the malicious to punish the malicious, and you will at once fulfil your own grim duty towards a woman who is vain to the point of madness, and as like yourself as possible.

The Prince. That I will not!

The Master of Ceremonies. Attempt to do anything else except what you must,

and you will experience a disharmony which you will not be able to explain.

The Prince. What is that?

The Master of Ceremonies. This—that you cannot at once cease being what you are, and you are what you wished to be. *(Claps his hands.)*

Enter the Lagmanska with the same clumsy elderly figure, but rouged, and with a powdered eighteenth-century peruke. She wears a low-cut rose-coloured dress, red shoes, and carries a fan of peacock's feathers.

The Lagmanska (somewhat doubtfully). Where am I! Have I come right?

The Master of Ceremonies. You have come quite right, and you are in the Waiting-room as we call it. It is so named because *(he sighs)* we spend our time here waiting——waiting for something that will some day come.

The Lagmanska. Yes, it is very nice——and there is the music——and there is a statue——who is that?

The Master of Ceremonies. That is a heathen god called Pan, because he was all in all to the ancients. And since we here are ancient, and more or less old-fashioned, we have set him up here to look at.

The Lagmanska. We are not old——

The Master of Ceremonies. Yes, we are, my queen; when the new era (*he sighs*) began, we could not follow, but remained behind——

The Lagmanska. The new era—— what sort of phrase is that——when did the era begin?

The Master of Ceremonies. That is easily calculated—with the year One. Yes, it was a clear starlit night and must have been mild, since the shepherds were out of doors.

The Lagmanska. Oh, indeed! Isn't there a ball here to-night?

The Master of Ceremonies. Yes, certainly. The Prince is only waiting to ask you.

The Lagmanska. Is he a real prince?

The Master of Ceremonies. Real, my queen, that is, he has complete reality of a certain kind.

The Lagmanska (to the Prince, who asks her for a dance). You do not look cheerful, Prince.

The Prince. No, I am not cheerful.

The Lagmanska. I certainly cannot say that it is very cheerful here——and then it smells of putty, as though the glaziers

had been here. And then what an extraordinary scent of linseed oil.

The Prince (shudders). What do you say? Do you mean of corpses.

The Lagmanska. I certainly said something not very pretty; it is not, however, the lady's part to say pretty things, but the gentleman's——

The Prince. What shall I say that you do not know already?

The Lagmanska. What I don't know already? Let me think. No, then it is better that I tell you that you are handsome, Prince.

The Prince. Now you exaggerate, my queen; I am not handsome, but I have always been said to have what they call a good appearance.

The Lagmanska. Just like myself. I was not a beauty—I mean, I am not at my time of life. How stupid I am! What did I want to say?

The Master of Ceremonies (to the musicians). Strike up!

(The Musicians seem to play, but not a sound is heard.)

The Master of Ceremonies. Now? Won't you dance?

The Prince (sadly). No, I have no pleasure in dancing.

The Master of Ceremonies. But you must; you are the only presentable cavalier.

The Prince. That is true enough (*thoughtfully*). But is that a proper occupation for me?

The Master of Ceremonies. How so?

The Prince. It seems to me sometimes that I have something else to think about, but then——then I forget it.

The Master of Ceremonies. Don't worry. Enjoy yourself so long as youth is there and cheeks glow with the joyful roses of youth. So, straight back and nimble leg!

(*The Prince smiles; offers the Lagmanska his hand; they dance a few minuet-steps together.*)

The Lagmanska (stops dancing). Ah! His hands are cold as ice. (*Advances towards the throne.*) Why don't the seven ladies there dance?

The Master of Ceremonies. How did the queen like the music?

The Lagmanska. It was fine, but they might play a little louder.

The Master of Ceremonies. Yes, they are all soloists and formerly used to wish to drown each other's voices, therefore they have to moderate them now.

The Lagmanska. But I asked why the seven sisters did not dance. Cannot the Master of the Ceremonies make them?

The Master of the Ceremonies. It wouldn't be worth the trouble, for they are as obstinate as sin. But will not the queen take her seat on the throne? We have a little play to perform in honour of the day.

The Lagmanska. Oh! how nice. But the Prince must conduct me!

The Prince (to the Master of the Ceremonies). Must I do that?

The Lagmanska. Oh fie! Humpback.

The Prince (spitting in her face). Have you no shame, old witch?

The Lagmanska (gives the Prince a box on the ear). There's one for you!

The Prince (flies at her and knocks her down). And that's in return!

(All hold their hands before their faces.)

The Prince (tears off the Lagmanska's wig so that her bald head is seen). Here is the false scalp; now we will take out the teeth!

The Master of Ceremonies. Enough! Enough! *(Raises the Lagmanska and flings a cloth over her head.)*

The Lagmanska (weeping). Alas! That I have let myself be made such a

fool of; I deserve no better, if I must confess.

The Prince. No, you deserve much worse; but you must not refer to my hump-back, for then the Devil is loose! It is wretched work to see an old woman so silly and so humiliated. It is a pity about you, as it is about us all.

All. About us all.

The Prince (contemptuously). The Queen!

The Lagmanska (equally contemptuously). The Prince! But haven't we met before?

The Prince. Yes, perhaps; in our youth, for I am old. You were just now dressed up, but now that we see ourselves here without disguise—certain features begin to become visible.

The Lagmanska. Say no more! Say no more! Oh, where have I come to? What is happening to me?

The Prince. Now I know! You are my sister.

The Lagmanska. But——my brother is dead. Have they deceived me? Or do the dead return?

The Prince. Everything returns.

The Lagmanska. Am I then dead or alive?

The Prince. I leave you to ask, for I know no difference. But you are just as you were when I once left you,—just as vain, and just as thievish.

The Lagmanska. Do you think you are better, then?

The Prince. Perhaps. I have the seven deadly sins, but you have invented an eighth—robbing the dead.

The Lagmanska. What do you mean?

The Prince. I sent you twelve years running, money for a wreath for mother's grave. You kept the money, and bought no wreath.

The Lagmanska. How do you know that?

The Prince. That is the only concern you have for your crime—to find out how I know it.

The Lagmanska. Prove it.

The Prince (takes bank-notes out of his pocket). Here are the notes.

The Lagmanska falls to the ground.

A church-bell sounds. All bend their heads but none fall on their knees.

The White Lady (enters, goes to the Lagmanska and lifts her up). Do you know me?

The Lagmanska. No.

The White Lady. I am Amalie's

mother. You have stolen the memory of me from her. You have obliterated me from her life, but now you will be struck out, and I shall again recover my child's love and prayers, which I need.

The Lagmanska. I see they have been gossiping with the minx; I will send her to keep swine.

(The Prince strikes her on the mouth.)

The White Lady. Don't strike her.

The Lagmanska. You intercede for me.

The White Lady. Yes, that is the lesson I have been taught.

The Lagmanska. Hypocrite! You would wish me as far under the earth as it is to the sun, if you only dared.

The Master of the Ceremonies (touches the Lagmanska with his staff; she falls to the earth). Lie down! accursed dog!

The Scene changes without a descent of the curtain; the statue of Pan sinks through the ground; the musicians, the throne, and the seven deadly sins disappear behind new stage scenery. Finally the cross-roads in the pine-forest re-appear and the Lagmanska lies at the foot of the sign-post. The witch stands near her.

The Witch. Stand up!

The Lagmanska. I cannot; I am frozen stiff.

The Witch. The sun rises, the cock has crowed, and the bell is sounding for morning prayer.

The Lagmanska. The sun is nothing to me.

The Witch. Then you will have to wander in darkness.

The Lagmanska. Alas! My eyes! What have you done?

The Witch. I only extinguished the light since it pained you. Up and go on now in cold and darkness till you drop!

The Lagmanska. Where is my husband? Amalie? Erich and Thyra—my children?

The Witch. Where are they? Wherever they are, you will not see them any more till your wanderings are over. So get up and go! Otherwise, I let loose my dogs.

(The Lagmanska goes out, feeling her way.)

Scene III

The hall of judgment. In the background the President's chair decorated in

white and gold and with the emblems of justice. In the centre of the hall, before the chair, the judicial table, with writing material, a Bible, bell and hammer.

Fastened against the wall in the background is the executioner's axe; underneath it are handcuffs; above it a large black crucifix.

The Lagman enters and comes slowly forward.

The bell is lifted from the table and rung; the hammer strikes a blow; the chairs move simultaneously towards the table; the Bible is opened; and the large wax-candles lit.

The Lagman stands still and shudders; then he approaches the cupboard. The cupboard opens, and papers are thrown out to the Lagman, who picks them up.

The Lagman. Ah! now I have luck! there are the guardianship accounts; there is the contract for the lease and the inventory. Yes!

(The handcuffs on the wall rattle.)

Rattle away! so long as the axe does not move, I don't mind. (He lays the documents on the judicial table and goes back to close the cupboard, the door of which, however, incessantly re-opens.)

There is a reason for everything. This

cupboard door has a spring which I do not understand, and because I don't understand, I am astonished, but not afraid.

(The axe on the wall moves.)

The axe moves; that has always signified decapitation, but to-day it only means that its centre of gravity is disturbed. No, but if I were to see my own ghost, then I should begin to reflect, for that is beyond this charlatan's power of conjuring.

(The Ghost comes from behind the cupboard; it is exactly like the Lagman, but has white blank eyes like a statue's.)

The Lagman (in alarm). Who art thou?

The Ghost. I am not. I was. I was the unjust judge who has come here to receive his sentence.

The Lagman. What hast thou done then, poor man?

The Ghost. All the evil that an unjust judge can do. Pray for me, thou who hast a clean conscience.

The Lagman. Am I to——pray for thee?

The Ghost. Yes! thou who hast not caused innocent blood to be shed.

The Lagman. That is certainly true; I

have never done that, and for the rest I have followed the letter of the law, so that I could rightly receive the title: "the righteous judge." Yes, without irony.

The Ghost. It would be an inopportune moment for jesting, since the Unseen are sitting in judgment.

The Lagman. What do you mean? Who are sitting in judgment?

The Ghost (*signs towards the judicial table*). You don't see them, but I do. (*The bell on the table is rung; a chair is pushed back from it.*) Pray for me.

The Lagman. That I will not. Justice must have its course. You must be a great criminal, who has arrived late at the consciousness of his guilt.

The Ghost. You are as stern as a good conscience.

The Lagman. Yes, that is the word: stern but just!

The Ghost. Then there is no mercy?

The Lagman. None.

The Ghost. No grace!

The Lagman. No.

(*The hammer falls; the seats are pushed back from the table.*)

The Ghost. Sentence was then pronounced; didst thou hear it?

The Lagman. I hear nothing.

The Ghost (signing towards the table).
And see nothing. Dost thou not see the
beheaded sailor, the land-surveyor, the
little chimney-sweep, the white lady, the
tenant?

The Lagman. No! I see absolutely
nothing.

The Ghost. Woe be to thee, when thine
eyes are once opened like mine! Just
now sentence was pronounced, "Guilty."
(*The candle on the table is put out.*)

The Lagman. Guilty!

The Ghost. You pronounced it your-
self. And you have been already judged.
Nothing remains now but the Great
Auction.

Act V

The same room as in the first scene of the second Act. It is arranged for an auction, with benches in the middle of the room. On the auctioneer's table stands the silver service, the clock, vases, candelabra, etc.

The portraits of the Lagman and Lagmanska have been taken down and stand leaning against the table.

(Enter The Neighbour and Amalie.)

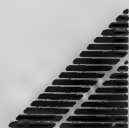
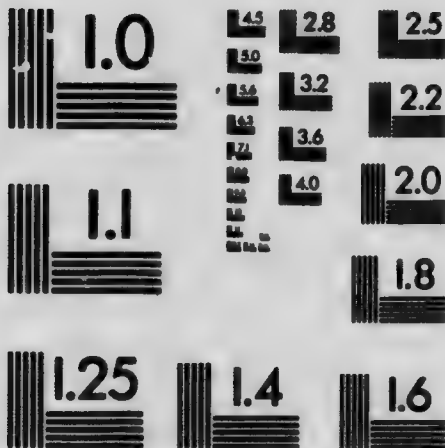
Amalie (in her scouring dress). Before mother went, she told me to clean the hall and stairs; it is winter now and cold, and I cannot say that I have enjoyed obeying her order.

The Neighbour. You haven't enjoyed it! Do you know, my child, you make great demands on yourself. Since you have been obedient, and stood the test, the time of your trial will come to an end, and I will tell you the secret of your life.



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Amalie. Speak, Neighbour, for I cannot reckon longer on my good will.

The Neighbour. Well, this woman whom you call mother is your step-mother! Your father married her when you were a year old. The reason you never saw your mother was because she died when you were born.

Amalie. That was it then! How strange to have had a mother, but never to have seen her! Tell me, have you seen her?

The Neighbour. I knew her.

Amalie. What did she look like?

The Neighbour. What she looked like? Her eyes were as blue as flax, and her hair yellow like stalks of corn.

Amalie. And tall and slight; and her hand so small and white as though she had only sewed silk all her life, and her mouth looked like a heart, and as though only kind words passed her lips.

The Neighbour. How do you know all that?

Amalie. I generally dream of her when I have been angry—and then she lifts her hand warningly, and the hand wears a ring with a brilliant green stone. That is she! Tell me, Neighbour, was there no picture of her here in the house?

The Neighbour. Yes, formerly there was; but whether it is still there, I don't know.

Amalie. The Lagmanska, then, is my step-mother. God is good to let me keep my mother's image unimpaired in my mind, and for the future I shall find it quite a matter of course that the old woman is unkind to me.

The Neighbour. Unkind stepmothers exist in order to produce good children. And you were not good, Amalie, but now you have become so, and therefore you shall have a Christmas-present in advance. (*He takes the portrait of the Lagmanska and opens the frame; a water-colour painting of Amalie's mother comes to view, resembling the above description.*)

Amalie (*on her knees before the picture*). My mother, my dream-mother (*rising*). But I shan't get the picture, as it is going to be sold at auction.

The Neighbour. Yes, you will, for the auction has been already held.

Amalie. When and where was it held?

The Neighbour. It was held somewhere else in a place you cannot know of, and to-day the things are only to be fetched.

Amalie. How strangely everything

happens. There are so many mysteries in this house! But tell me, where is my step-mother? I have not seen her for a long time.

The Neighbour. Well, I must tell you; she is there whence no man returns.

Amalie. She is dead?

The Neighbour. She is dead, found frozen in a swamp into which she had fallen.

Amalie. Merciful God, have mercy upon her!

The Neighbour. He will do that in His own good time, especially if you pray for her.

Amalie. Certainly I will.

The Neighbour. You have truly been a good child, though she was so malicious.

Amalie. Don't speak so, now she is dead.

The Neighbour. Very well! May she rest in peace!

Amalie. But where is father?

The Neighbour. That is a secret for us all. But it is good of you to ask after him before you ask after Adolf.

Amalie. Adolf! Yes, where is he? The children cry for him and Christmas is near. Oh, what a Christmas it will be!

The Neighbour. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. And now take your Christmas present and go. Here, after the auction, things will be put in order, and then you will hear more news.

Amalie (taking her mother's portrait). I go, now no longer alone, and I believe some good will happen to me, but I know not what. (*Exit on the right.*)

The Neighbour. I know! but go now for what is going to happen here is not a sight for children.

(*He opens the door in the back-ground, and rings with the auction-bell. People enter in the following order: the poor in a body; the sailor; the chimney-sweep; the Neighbour with a widow and orphans; the surveyor. The Other One enters with a pile of papers. He takes up the auction-hammer, and strikes the table.*)

The Other One. At the bankruptcy-auction held in the sessions-house by the Lagman of the district, the following items were judicially assigned to the absent creditors. They can now be carried away and taken in possession by the parties concerned.

The Lagman (entering; he looks old and decrepit). Stop! in the name of the law!

The Other One (making as though he threw something at the Lagman, who remains confused and silent). Don't talk of the law here; here the Gospel is proclaimed but not for you, who wished to buy the kingdom of heaven with stolen money.

First. The widow and her children have the silver service which the Lagman took from them as an honorarium for his false inventory; the silver became somewhat tarnished in his unclean hands, but in yours, it will become white again, I hope.

Then there is the Lagman's ward, who had to become a chimney sweep because he was cheated of his inheritance. There is the property your guardian had charge of with the accounts duly drawn up. You need not thank *him*. Next comes the land surveyor, who on account of falsified maps being delivered to him made an illegal distribution of land, and had to suffer two years imprisonment, though he was guiltless. What can you do for him, Lagman? Can you undo what has been done, or restore to him his lost credit?

The Lagman. Give him a hoe, the clod-hopper, then he will be content. His credit before was not worth two farthings.

(The Other One strikes the Lagman on the mouth. The people spit at him, and murmur angrily with clenched fists.)

The Other One. Next we have the brother of the unjustly beheaded sailor. Can you restore to him his brother's life? No! Can you atone for it with your own life? No, for it is not worth so much as his.

Finally it is the neighbour's turn and he receives back the property which the Lagman in a perfectly legal way had deprived him of. But since the Neighbour is unskilled in jurisprudence, he has, contrary to all precedent, installed the Lagman's son-in-law as life tenant, cancelled his debts, and made him his heir.

The Lagman. I appeal to the Higher Court.

The Other One. The case has gone through all the Courts except the Highest, and you won't get there for all your stamped papers. For if you attempted to do so, all these poor, whom you have deprived of their support, would cry "Guilty!" This is all the restitution that can now be made; what remains falls to the poor; clocks, vases, jewellery; in this are included, moreover, presents, bribes, tips, souvenirs, and what has been honestly

come by, as there are no witnesses or proofs. (*To the poor.*) Take back your own again; your tears have washed the guilt from the unjustly gotten goods. (*The poor seize the things.*)

Now remains the last item which I have to put up to auction. This pauper, formerly the Lagman, is offered to the lowest bidder, to be used for parochial duties. How much is offered?

(*Silence.*)

No offer!

Once! Twice! Thrice! No offer! Do you hear? No one will have you. Very well then, I will take you and despatch you to well-deserved punishment.

The Lagman (bowed down). Is there no atonement?

The Other One. Yes! Punishment is atonement! Out with him in the wood, and stone him according to the law of Moses! The Lagman knows no other law! Out with him!

(*The people seize him and push him out.*)

CURTAIN.

Scene II

The "Waiting-room." The same scenery as in the second scene of the fourth Act. A deep valley surrounded by high black rocks. In the back-ground a large pair of scales, in which new-comers are weighed.

The Lagman and The Lagmanska are sitting at a little table opposite each other.

The Lagman (staring before him as if in a trance). Hush! I was dreaming something! They threw stones at me—and yet I feel no pain—then it was dark and blank till—how long it lasted I cannot say. But now I begin to hear and feel again. Now it is as though I were being carried—ugh! how cold! they are washing me, I believe—I lie in a six-cornered box like a bee's cell, which smells of the carpenter—they are carrying me, and a bell is sounding—Wait a bit! now I am riding, but not in a tram, though a bell keeps on ringing; now I am sinking down as though I were drowning

—thump, thump, thump, there are three knocks on the lid; now there is reading, the priest is reading—and now the boys sing—What is it? And then continual thumps on the lid—thump, thump, thump, thump, thump, thump. Then an end and silence! (*Wakes up.*) Where am I? I am choking; it is so stuffy and close. Is it you? Where are we? Whose is the statue there?

The Lagmanska. They say that is the New God.

The Lagman. It looks like a goat!

The Lagmanska. Perhaps it is the god of the goats.

The Lagman. "The goats on the left hand"—what is that I remember.

The Prince (entering). It is the god Pan!

The Lagman. Satan?

The Prince. The same! Exactly the same! And if the shepherds at night—I don't mean THE shepherds—catch a glimpse of a single hair of his, they are seized with a panic dread.

The Lagman (rising). Alas! I won't stay here! Alas! Cannot one get away? I will go out. (*Wanders about vainly seeking for an outlet.*)

The Other One (entering in the garb of a Franciscan). Here there are only entrances, but no exits.

The Lagman. Is that Father Colomba?

The Other One. No, it is the Other One.

The Lagman. As a monk.

The Other One. Yes, don't you know, when the Other One becomes old, he becomes a monk, and sometimes he really becomes one. But to speak seriously, for here everything is serious; this is my festal dress which I can only wear this one day in the year in order that I may remember what I once possessed and what I have lost.

The Lagman (seriously). What day in the year is this?

The Other One (rises and inclines his head). It is Christmas Eve.

The Lagman (approaching the Lagmanska). It is Christmas Eve! Do you know, I dare not ask where we are—I dare not, yet let us go home to the children, to our own.

The Lagmanska. Yes, let us go home from here, and then begin a new life in peace and harmony.

The Other One. It is too late!

The Lagmanska (despairingly). Good friend, help us, have mercy, pardon us!

The Other One. It is too late!

The Lagman (taking the Lagmanska's hand). I have such fear. Don't ask him where we are; I don't want to know. But one thing I should like to know; will there never be an end?

The Other One. Never! We don't know the word "end" here.

The Lagman (paralysed). Never an end! (*Looks round.*) Does the sun never shine down in this cold damp place?

The Other One. Never, for those who dwell here have not loved the sun.

The Lagman. That is true; I have cursed the sun. Can I make confession?

The Other One. No! You must bear your sins within you till they swell and choke you.

The Lagmanska (falls on her knees). Oh!—think! I cannot pray! (*Rises, walks about restlessly, and wrings her hands.*)

The Other One. Because there is no one to pray for you.

The Lagmanska (despairingly). My children, send someone here to speak a word of hope and forgiveness.

The Other One. No, that cannot be. Your children have forgotten you and sit there and rejoice that you are gone. (*A picture of the home appears like a photograph on the wall, with Adolf, Amalie, Erich, Thyra, and the Christmas Tree, and the Playfellow in the background.*)

The Lagman. They sit at the Christmas table and rejoice over our distress? No, that is not true, for they were better than we.

The Other One. You strike a new note! I had heard that you were a righteous man.

The Lagman. I? I was a great sinner—the greatest that has ever existed!

The Other One. H'm! H m!

The Lagman. And if you say anything evil about the children, you sin! I know that they pray for us.

The Lagmanska (kneeling). I hear them telling their beads: hush! I hear them!

The Other One. You are quite wrong, for what you hear is the singing of the workmen who are breaking down the Mausoleum.

The Lagman. The Mausoleum! Where we were to have lain in peace!

The Prince. Under the shadow of twelve wreaths!

The Lagman. Who is that!

The Prince (*pointing to the Lagmanska*). This is my sister, so you are my brother-in-law.

The Lagman. Aha! That is the good-for-nothing!

The Prince. In this inn we are all good-for-nothings.

The Lagman. But not all hump-backs!

The Prince (*striking him on the mouth*). Don't refer to that, or you set the Devil loose.

The Lagman. So a deserving man in my social position is treated! What a Christmas Eve!

The Prince. Perhaps you expected Christmas cakes and pastry!

The Lagman. Not exactly that, but one ought to obtain the means of subsistence.

The Prince. Christmas is certainly kept here.

The Lagman. For how long?

The Prince. How long? We do not count by time here, since time has ceased, and a minute can be an eternity.

The Lagmanska. We suffer what our deeds deserve; therefore don't complain.

The Prince. Attempt to complain, and you will see something new. Here they are not particular, they squeeze without using legal forms.

The Lagman. Are they beating clothes outside on a day like this?

The Prince. No, that is an extra-legal treat with the stick to remind those who have forgotten the meaning of the day.

The Lagman. Is there bodily ill-usage here? Is it possible that well-educated men should lay hands on each other.

The Prince. Here the ill-educated are educated, and those who have behaved like rascals, are treated as such.

The Lagman. That goes beyond all bounds.

The Prince. Yes, for the bounds have been over-passed. Prepare yourself! I have already been outside and had mine.

The Lagman (shuddering). This humiliation! That is robbing one of all human dignity!

The Prince. Ha! Ha! Human dignity! See the scales there! There human dignity is weighed and all come short!

The Lagman (sits down at the table).
I could never have believed——

The Prince. No, you believed only in your own righteousness and your good luck. And yet you had Moses and the Prophets and more, for the dead appeared to you.

The Lagman. My children! My children! Can no one go to them from here with a greeting and a warning?

The Prince. No! for ever, no!

(The Witch enters with a large box full of peep-show boxes.)

The Lagman. Who is that?

The Witch. These are Christmas presents for the good! Peep-show boxes *(handing him one)*. Take it. There is nothing to pay.

The Lagman. Well, you seem a friendly person anyhow, and the consideration you show to a man of my age and position does honour to your perception and your heart.

The Witch. The Lagman is too good, but I hope he will not take it ill that I have thought a little of the others also.

The Lagman (taken aback). Hag! are you laughing at me?

The Witch (spits in his face). Go! law-trampler!

The Lagman. Alas! into what company have we fallen!

The Witch. Isn't it good enough for you, old perjurer, bribe-receiver, falsifier, inheritance-stealer, right-wrester! Look in your peep-show box! there you have the whole panorama, "From the cradle to the grave"; there you have the whole story. Look!

(The Lagman looks in the box and rises with a shudder.)

The Witch. I hope my little gift will add to your Christmas joy. *(She gives similar boxes to the Lagmanska and the rest.)*

The Lagman (sitting at the table with the Lagmanska opposite him). What do you see?

The Lagmanska. Everything is there, everything! And have you noticed that it is all black? The whole bright course of life has grown dark and the hours which seemed full of harmless pleasure appear disgusting, abominable, and almost criminal. It is as though all the memories, even the tenderest, had become rotten.

The Lagman. Yes, you are right. Not one memory looks bright in this darkness. The first love of my youth looks like a corpse; when I think of the good Amalie, I see a bad woman; the little children make grimaces at me like street-urchins;

my farm is a pig-stye, the vineyard a dust-heap covered with thistles and the Mausoleum, ugh! an urinal! When I think of the green wood, the foliage looks as brown as tobacco, the clear stream looks as if it flowed from a dunghill and the blue vault of heaven appears a sooty ceiling. The sun I only remember as a name, and what was called the moon, which hung like a lamp over bays and groves in the evenings of one's youth, I only remember as——no, I remember it no more. But I still have the words, though they are only sounds without significance——love, wine, song, flowers, children, joy! Don't they sound pretty: and that is all we have left. (*Looking at his watch.*) The watch has stopped. I am so hungry, but I am thirsty too, and long for tobacco. I am tired also, and want to sleep. All my desires are awake; they tear and worry me, but not one of them can I satisfy. Ah! we are wretched, wretched!

The Lagmanska. I have an indescribable longing for a cup of tea.

The Lagman. Hot, green tea. That is exactly what I want——with a dash of rum in it.

The Ligmanska. No, not rum. I prefer a sweet biscuit.

The Prince (*approaching and listening*). With sugar on it? If you sing, yes!

The Lagman. This coarse talk pains me more than anything else.

The Prince. Because you don't know how much the other will pain you.

The Lagman. What other?

The Ligmanska. No, hush! We don't want to know. Hush!

The Prince. But I will tell you! It begins with——

The Ligmanska (*puts her fingers in her ears and screams*). Mercy! Silence, silence, silence!

The Prince. No, I won't be silent. and my brother-in-law is curious. Therefore he shall know. The second letter is V.

The Lagman. This uncertainty torments me more than anything else. Tell me, in the Devil's name, or kill me!

The Prince. Kill! ha! ha. Here we are immortal, soul and body alike, the little that is left of them. Meantime the third letter is——now, you cannot know any more——

(*Enter a short lean man in a gray dress, with black lips, a gray beard and gray*

hands. He speaks in an undertone.)
May I speak to the Lagmanska for a moment!

The Lagmanska (rising in alarm).
What is it?

The Gray Man (with an uncanny malicious smile). I will tell you outside.

The Lagmanska (weeping). No, I won't go, I won't go.

The Gray Man (laughs). It is not dangerous! Come along. I will only talk a little with you. Come! *(They retire to the back-ground.)*

The Prince (to the Lagman). A little Christmas gift is pleasant.

The Lagman. Do you mean to mishandle a woman?

The Prince. Here all inequalities are done away with and a woman is treated exactly like a man.

The Lagman. Devil!

The Prince. Call me so if you like, but not "Hump-back," for that is my last ambition.

The Other One (approaching the table). Now what do you think of animal magnetism? It can do wonders with rascals.

The Lagman. I don't understand a word about it.

The Other One. Just as I thought, and it is good of you to confess that there are things which you don't understand.

The Lagman. Granting that I find myself in the region of the dead——

The Other One. Call it "hell," for that is its name.

The Lagman (stammering). I should like to remind you that He who once descended here to save the lost——

The Prince (at a sign from The Other One striking the Lagman on the mouth). Don't argue!

The Lagman. I am not listened to! This is absolute desperation! Without mercy, without hope, without end!

The Other One. True! Here there is only justice and retribution, especially justice. Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, just as you wanted to have it.

The Lagman. But among men there is pardon; there is none here.

The Other One. Only princes can pardon. And as a jurist, you must know that an appeal for pardon must be presented in order to be granted.

The Lagman. For me there is no pardon.

The Other One (giving the Prince a

sign to go to one side). You think, then, that your sin is too great?

The Lagman. Yes.

The Other One. Then I will tell you some good news. You see, there can only be an end, when there is a beginning. And you have made the beginning. But the continuation is long and difficult.

The Lagman. Oh! God is good.

The Other One. You said so.

The Lagman. But——there is one thing which cannot be altered——one!

The Other One. You mean the mon-strance, which ought to have been gold but was silver. Well; don't you think that He who changed water into wine can change silver into gold?

The Lagman (kneeling). Still my mis-deed is too great, too great to be forgiven.

The Other One. Now, you are making too much of yourself again! But now rise up! Here we, too, shall keep Christmas after our fashion. The sun cannot reach here, as you know, neither the moon, but in this night, only this, a Star rises so high above the mountains that it can be seen from this depth. That is the Star which lighted the shepherds' way in the desert, and that is the Morning Star.

(He claps his hands; the statue of Pan sinks through the earth.) The Lagmanska comes, looking quiet and silently glad; she goes towards the Lagman and reaches him her hand trustfully.

The stage fills with shadows, who all look up towards the mountain in the background.

Behind the scenes two soprano voices and one alto, accompanied by stringed instruments and a harp, are heard singing:

Puer natus est nobis
Et filius datus est nobis
Cujus imperium super humerum ejus
Et vocabitur nomen ejus
Magni consilii Angelus

Choir (Soprano, Alto, Tenor and Bass)

Cantate Domino canticum novum
Quia mirabilia fecit!

The Star now appears above the mountain in the background. All fall on their knees. A part of the cliff-wall is pushed to one side, disclosing the Manger with the Child and the Mother. The Shepherds worship on the left hand, the three Kings on the right.

Choir (two Sopranos and altos)
Gloria in excelsis Deo,
Et in terra Pax
Hominibus bonae voluntatis

THE END

